

# *Hungary and Ethiopia: Formal and Informal Relations, 1868–1941*

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## *1) The aims, sources and methodology of the study*

The dissertation's main objective is to outline the relations between Hungary and Ethiopia from their beginnings to the Second World War. These relations can be formal (commerce, politics) and informal (travel writing, press, fiction). The topic is reasonable because in the era of imperialism Ethiopia resisted to colonization, thus she was the only one independent country in the Sub-Saharan Africa. Therefore in Hungary there was a relatively significant interest in Ethiopia.

This study is based on both primary and secondary sources. In Hungary the National Archives (Budapest), the Archives of the Geographical Museum (Érd), the records of the Munkácsy Museum (Békéscsaba) have been used, and abroad the Public Record Office (London), Drzavni Arhiv u Rijeci (Fiume) and the Archives of Wales. The majority of these documents are used here for the first time. There are also published documents among the sources, and both Hungarian and foreign language monographs on the subject are discussed. The dissertation is organized chronologically with a wide spectrum of the events. There are numerous quotations in the text; the study would be poor without their content, arguments, contemporary idioms, and language.

## *2) The structure of the dissertation*

There are four chapters in this dissertation including sub-chapters. Chapter I includes the era unfolding the early Hungarian–Ethiopian relations to World War I. Since the second half of the nineteenth century, there had been a growing interest in Ethiopia according to the contemporary Hungarian press. In this era the first Hungarian travellers got to Ethiopia. One of them, Franz Hassen (probably of Saxon origin) lived there for decades and married an Ethiopian woman. Counts Sámuel Teleki and Vilmos Zichy were adventurers and hunters of the aristocracy. The latter fought against Ethiopia as an officer in the Egyptian army and died in the war of 1875.

There is a sub-chapter to show the relations of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Italy with a special attention to the Italian imperialism. Italy's fiascos in Africa (1887, 1896) were great motivations for her to maintain the Triple Alliance with Germany and Austria-Hungary, even though there were serious tensions between the members. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy disfavoured Italy's African attempts because these weakened the Triple Alliance's potentials in Europe.

In the same chapter the evolution of the commercial relations is also presented from the career of the first successful businessmen (and even a businesswoman) through the official commercial treaty (Ludwig Höhnel's mission in 1905) to the establishment of the consulate of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in Addis Ababa (1912). The Ethiopian delegations are also mentioned which visited Austria and Hungary in 1907 and 1914.

There are new historical data about the adventurous life of Károly Inger (aka Suleyman ibn Inger Abdullah). The dissertation points out that Inger really travelled in Africa, but the great majority of his statements are false. At the same time, it becomes clear that the contemporary Hungarian government supported Inger's colonizing aims in Somalia. Count Lajos Königsegg's three novels are also analyzed with a special attention to the possibility that these fictions were based on true stories.

Chapter II is discussing the era between the two World Wars. The lack of the diplomatic connections between Hungary and Ethiopia was significant in this era. Even so there were dozens of Hungarian emigrants to Ethiopia. Thanks to the detailed biographical data, the motivations of the émigrés could be analyzed. Besides wanderlust and personal misfortune, the Trianon Peace Treaty's social consequences cannot be neglected regarding the fact that the majority of the émigrés were intellectuals (physicians, ex-military officers, bank officials), who impoverished in Hungary. There are detailed data about two Hungarian medical doctors' (Kálmán Mészáros and László Sáska) African career, from their settlement in Ethiopia to their struggles during and after the Italo-Ethiopian war in 1935-1936. There are also parts about the two most successful Hungarians in Ethiopia, Mátyás Gajdács (who lived there the longest time as a Hungarian between 1911 and 1965) and Sándor Dörflinger. Only the two of them were financially successful in Ethiopia in this era. Gajdács, who was a taxidermist, became a worldwide known ornithologist and the first description of Ethiopia's bird fauna was made by him.

Chapter III deals with the Italo-Ethiopian war and the related international conflict in 1935-1936. The aim is to show that the war in Ethiopia indirectly affected Hungary's foreign policy. There is a detailed analysis concerning every aspect of the matter. Since at that time fascist Italy was the only ally of Hungary, the latter got into serious trouble. On the one hand, because the Italian army fought in Africa, Italy's Central-European influence in connection with Hungary became doubtful. This confused the Hungarian government led by Gyula Gömbös as far as the revision of the Trianon Peace Treaty was concerned, since – as it is clear from the documents – until 1935 a peaceful revision was their conception with Italy's diplomatic support. On the other hand, somewhat unexpect-

edly, the League of Nations condemned Italy as an aggressor state, thus Hungary had to vote about the notorious sanctions. In this tender and grave situation the Hungarian politicians decided precipitately to abstain from beans. However, due to this decision the Western Powers accused Hungary of being disloyal to the League of Nations and to the policy of the collective security.

Many Hungarian politicians stated the case. Besides the speeches in the Hungarian parliament, Ferenc Herczeg's (as president of the Revisionist League) and Count István Bethlen's writings are discussed in detail. The dissertation argues that the Italo-Ethiopian conflict had a great impact on the Hungarian foreign policy, and as a direct consequence Hungary began to look to Germany as her primary ally, giving up the possibility of a peaceful revision.

There is a sub-chapter about the contemporary Hungarian press. The vast majority of this, under political pressure, published pro-Italian articles. The rare exception was the political magazine called "Századunk". Its editor-in-chief, Imre Csécsy, entered into a debate with the well-known (but pro-Italian) Ignotus. Moreover, another Hungarian periodical in Kolozsvár ("Korunk") deserves special attention because it could write freely and objectively about Italian Fascism because Rumania was against Italy in the international conflict.

As the ally of Italy, it was permitted to Hungary to send a military observer to the Ethiopian front. Captain József Németh was chosen but his fair objectivity caused him trouble. He held lectures about his observations, the weak equipment and the brutality of the Italian army, and it caused a diplomatic scandal in Budapest.

There were also two Hungarian war correspondents in Ethiopia: László Faragó (Ladislav Farago) and Ödön Demeter (Edmund Demaitre). It is emphasized that their activity was important not only in the history of the journalism. A part about Béla Menczer introduces this extraordinary person who was a political advisor beside the emigrant Ethiopian government in London between 1936 and 1940.

Chapter IV focuses on the "colonization" of Ethiopia, i.e. the relations between Italian East Africa and Hungary. As an ally of the Fascist Italy, Hungary tried to cash in her previous stand by Italy in the League of Nations. The Hungarian-Ethiopian Commercial Ltd. was established already in 1936 and even younger Miklós Horthy, the governor's son was among the founders. Hungary contracted a colonial agreement with Italy in 1937, which fixed a two million-lire clearing. Hungary imported mainly tropical fruits and coffee, while she exported machines and motors to Ethiopia. The latter were manufactured in the Hungarian Machine Works and Ganz Co., but there are documents about the business of the Pick Salami Factory in Szeged.

In the meantime the Italian promises about Hungarian plantations remained unfulfilled in spite of the support of the Hungarian diplomacy because Italy could not pacify Ethiopia. In Hungary there was significant interest in emigrating and settling in Ethiopia but the Italian state refused it.

There is a sub-chapter about the Hungarian Fascist journalist Tibor Ratkóczy, who travelled to Ethiopia in 1938 with the special permission of the Italian gov-

ernment. Although his reports are full of fascist and chauvinistic parts, his book is a primary source about Italian East Africa.

In the end, the study discusses the activity of the two previously mentioned doctors during and after the Italo–Ethiopian war. Kálmán Mészáros joined the International Red Cross staff and worked for it until the last moment of the war. László Sáska was not working on the fronts, but he became an eye-witness of the war crimes committed by Italians (genocide, poison gas, etc.). His accounts about these events were used later at international forums.

There is an appendix attached to the dissertation with a chronology, photographs, maps, and an important part of Béla Menczer's autobiography concerning his connections to the emigrant Ethiopian government in London.

### *3) Contribution to field*

A history of the Hungarian–Ethiopian relations is a novelty in itself. It has many aspects, and not only the formal political and commercial connections are discussed, but also the informal side. It is a new approach to present and analyze the interpretation of a Sub-Saharan country in the Hungarian press and fiction. There are new details in the political history too, focusing on the dilemma of the Hungarian foreign policy in 1935–1936. The evolution of the commercial relations (especially concerning Italian East Africa) and the activity of the Hungarian émigrés and many travellers have not been revealed until now.

### *4) Perspectives*

As past cannot be discovered in its originality, thus this dissertation is not complete. During the discussion of the several matters of the study it was pointed out that some of the sources (diaries, rare newspapers) are still missing. The prospective emergence of these sources could make this study more complete.

Beyond that, although this dissertation ends with World War II, the study should be continued in the future. In the 1950s diplomatic connections were established again between Hungary and Ethiopia and in the following decades (until the early 1990s) there was a vivid and friendly relation between the two states. In Ethiopia dozens of Hungarian firms acted while hundreds of Ethiopian students visited Hungarian universities and high schools. The number of the Hungarian physicians working in Ethiopia during the 1970s and 1980s was also significant.